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INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHWH/WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HAVANA 000434

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y -- CLASSIFICATION REASON ADDED

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [CU](#)

SUBJECT: GOC TIGHTENS THE SCREWS ON OPPOSITION ACTIVITY

REF: A. HAVANA 397

[1](#)B. HAVANA 426

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Classified By: COM Michael E. Parmly for reasons 1.4 (B,D)

[1](#)1. (C) In REF A, we commented that we believed that the May 19-21 media campaign centering on USINT's relations with various dissidents was directed primarily at the dissidents. Events in the succeeding days seem to support that thesis as the GOC has ignored our statement that they should make a formal complaint through appropriate channels if they have an issue with USINT behavior. Moreover, while our day-to-day activities proceed normally, contacts in civil society have told us they are under much greater pressure and overt harassment and surveillance.

[1](#)2. (C) If, as we suspect, the goal of the GOC was to stifle any criticism of the regime, how successful have they been? The answer is: somewhat. Civil Society members may be taking greater care and moving more deliberately, but they continue to move. COM and PolEcon Counselor met June 3 with Martha Beatriz Roque (MBR) and Vladimiro Roca to see how they were getting along and ask if they were still moving forward with their proposals. MBR, who has not come back to USINT to use the internet since the media campaign, was comparatively subdued, but told us that she was going forward with plans to distribute up to 3000 copies of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The "Agenda Minima" unity effort begun by Roque and Roca, now called the "Agenda de Transicion," remains active and they intend to keep it on schedule. Both stated that they had not changed their views on assistance from the USG, hoping that they could begin to receive direct grants for projects they develop. MBR presented a letter addressed to POTUS to COM (REF B) in which she suggests that opening remittances is also an important way to get resources to the opposition in the future. While both Roca and Roque seemed undeterred, they did comment that surveillance had been increased and made much more visible.

[1](#)3. (C) Likewise, leading member of the Damas de Blanco Laura Pollan complained that her house is virtually surrounded and that the Damas have been followed overtly during their regular Sunday walk as a group and individually. Nevertheless, Pollan also mentioned a series of activities the Damas have planned for the next few weeks that are essentially the same as actions they have taken in the past.

[1](#)4. (C) While MBR has not come back to USINT yet (we believe she will, however), other members of civil society have been turning out in force in spite of regime pressure. The DCM

hosted a dinner for the US National Bar Association on June 2 and invited several leading members of civil society as well.

Though some commented that they had been visited by state security agents that afternoon asking about their attendance at the dinner, all of those invited attended and contributed to a lively discussion.

¶5. (C) We are pleased to say that some of our European colleagues also have stepped up their contacts with civil society members. The German DCM hosted a reception that included virtually all of the leading dissidents, and attracted even the usually hyper-cautious Oswaldo Paya. The Italian DCM has a similar event planned for June 9.

¶6. (C) While civil society members may not be totally cowed, it is clear that the GOC is stepping up acts of intimidation and surveillance. In addition to the points noted above, a rock was thrown at the front door of Oswaldo Paya's residence on June 1. On June 3, police broke up a meeting at 1230 a.m. at an apartment the Vedado section of Havana and detained 12 individuals including Jorge Luis Garcia Perez (Antunez). All were returned to their homes--including those from outside Havana--and released with a warning that they should cease "counter-revolutionary" activity. Notably, the meeting had been arranged by word of mouth and set for the middle of the night for security reasons, but police came to break it up only 15 minutes after it started.

¶7. (C) COMMENT: After a spate of "reforms" had been announced by the GOC over the course of several weeks, nothing similar has come out for almost a month. The regime may be trying to gauge the impact, both among the population at large and among forces within government leadership itself, of the changes that were announced. Press and the Havana rumor mill indicate that newly allowable goods are

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being sold as quickly as they are made available, and that demand far outstrips the supply of anything that has a market--which is to say virtually everything.

¶8. (C) COMMENT CONTINUED: We believe that the regime wants to be sure that no one in civil society is able to capitalize on this pent up demand and accompanying frustration by forming a political alternative. Therefore, it is making an all out effort to neutralize opposition members. In previous years they might have simply arrested and imprisoned all they thought to be ring-leaders. Several dissidents have noted that the actions of May 19-21 echoed a similar campaign just prior to the March 2003 "Black Spring" when 75 dissidents were imprisoned. However, we believe the GOC is taking a more careful approach at the moment in part in hopes that the June EU COLAT meeting will result in a lifting of sanctions. If the EU takes no action to lift the sanctions, the GOC may re-think its "softer" approach to the civil society members. At the moment, however, those individuals seem to be taking a deep breath and then jumping right back into their previous activity. In support of that activity, we plan to continue our own efforts to stay in frequent contact with opposition members and assist them where we can.

PARMLY